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Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-fifth session

22 February–4 March 2011

Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by Zonta International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.

Statement

1. Zonta International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, is an international organization with over 31,000 members worldwide. Founded in 1919, Zonta International's mission has always been to advance the status of women. In 1938, Zonta International established the Amelia Earhart Fellowship Program to encourage and financially support women pursuing PhD doctoral degrees in aerospace-related sciences and engineering. The fellowships were established as a living memorial to Zontian and aviatrix Amelia Earhart and are intended to encourage women to expand their career options. Since its inception, 1,297 fellowships totalling \$7 million have been given to 902 fellows from 64 countries. Through advocacy, Zonta International is dedicated to helping women break through the obstacles to education, especially in the areas of science, technology and engineering.

2. As evidenced by the reports of an expert panel convened by the Commission, there are many areas of achievement that still need to be addressed, such as:

- The enforcement of laws for equal education, especially in the fields of science, technology and engineering. While many countries have enacted such laws, implementation is necessary for changes to occur
- The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action emphasize the need to increase women's access to science and technology education. This was reinforced in 2000, during the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly
- Bias and gender stereotyping limit the education and empowerment of women and must be abandoned in order for women and girls to be truly empowered
- The marginalization of women and girls in the areas of science, technology and engineering education through bias or gender stereotyping prevents them from having equal opportunities to full employment and decent work
- Violence against women and girls is an enormous barrier to equal opportunity and must be addressed. Women and girls will not attend school if attempting to do so makes them fear for their lives
- Equal pay and gender discrimination in the workplace are two important issues that if ignored will stymie the advancement of the status of women everywhere and impede their empowerment
- The assertion that women are not suited to science, technology and engineering because of biological gender differences is merely justification for the exclusion of women and girls from these educational fields
- Women must be included in policymaking decisions so that they may help to structure a non-biased, gender-equal education system

Although progress has been made, there is still a need for laws that provide for the inclusion of women and girls in education and job training. Many women's groups around the world have called for increased emphasis on the need to bring women into the mainstream of science, technology and engineering education. Women must be free to accomplish their goals in whatever area they choose if they are ever to achieve true empowerment. At present, many girls all over the world have no educational goals because they know that those paths are closed to them.



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Statement submitted by Soroptimist International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.



Statement

1. Soroptimist International, a global voice for women and girls from a wide socio-economic spectrum, presents the participants at the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women with a challenge. Can we, as advocates and activists for women and girls, take the courageous and controversial steps to achieve true, meaningful and sustainable gender equality in education and employment? Can we look beyond numbers and dig into the underlying economic, social and cultural determinants of women and girls' ability to achieve their fullest potential in education and employment? Soroptimist International calls upon Government officials, representatives of civil society, the private sector and all interested parties to join together in collaboration and partnership to make a difference. We submit the following statement illustrating some of the fundamental barriers Soroptimist International has identified through its global network of 90,000 women in 125 countries, and women and girl-driven recommendations to overcome these barriers.

2. Learning and leadership for girls and women at all ages is the foundation for development, economic growth and poverty reduction. Despite their clear benefits, we live in a world where many women, in both the global North and the global South, lack basic skills in reading and writing. Quality of education must be as much a priority as enrolment rates; an equal opportunity to learn is no less a human right than the right to be enrolled in school. Girls from minority backgrounds or rural communities are far less likely to enrol in school and, if they do, are less likely to achieve the same outcomes as their peers. Discrimination, gender stereotypes, and even low self-esteem create environments where girls cannot perform to their potential. These barriers remain a constant challenge throughout women's lifetimes. Most educational aid targets children and adolescents, leaving already vulnerable women without access to learning opportunities.

3. Soroptimist International works to ensure that women and girls have access to skills and confidence throughout their lifetimes to enable improved outcomes and achievements in education and employment. Across the globe, there are hundreds of successful local, national and international Soroptimist projects working to educate and empower girls and women. Our experience illustrates both what works and what we still need to do. With this in mind, Soroptimist International urges Governments, civil society, and partners to:

(a) Ensure that policies and programmes take a life-course approach to education and employment, recognizing and understanding that access to learning is a human right at all ages and that women and girls have different needs at different times in their lives;

(b) Improve and prioritize appropriately disaggregated (on the basis, inter alia, of gender, age and ethnicity) and internationally comparable data collection, encompassing process and outcome indicators. It is unacceptable to allow numbers and statistics to mask underlying inequalities;

(c) Work with local partners to improve facilities so that women and girls are afforded education that is accessible, acceptable, available and of good quality. This includes gender-appropriate and -sensitive sanitation facilities, safe environments, dormitories for girls and other aspects as required;

(d) Take a human rights-based approach to education and employment, bringing particular attention and focus to the participation of women and girls in decision- and policymaking in a broad range of settings, including both the public and private spheres;

(e) Understand that education is more than traditional learning in classroom settings and therefore to take a holistic approach, including the skills-and-confidence framework championed by Soroptimist International;

(f) Take the necessary steps to change societal perceptions of traditionally "female"-dominated fields such as teaching, nursing, caregiving and domestic work, to show the phenomenal impact and importance of these professions. We must collectively increase our valuation of these professions, both culturally and economically, and ensure that these professions are remunerated in ways that adequately reflect their impact and importance;

(g) Consider also that by encouraging women to enter traditionally "male"-dominated fields, there may be an inherent and underlying message that traditionally "female"-dominated fields are of lesser quality and importance. Alongside encouraging women to enter into traditionally "male"-dominated fields, we also must work to encourage men to enter into traditionally "female"-dominated fields to truly overcome and change occupational segregation. The unconscious bias in job selection works both ways;

(h) Legislate and advocate for increased paternity leave; women and men must have equal opportunity to achieve a work-life balance, thus changing societal perceptions of the gender stereotypes in childcare and taking the first steps towards equalizing career progression. Additionally, as noted by many experts in the field, improving return to work schemes for both women and men will also work towards equality;

(i) Approach sex- or gender-based quotas with careful planning and ensure that women, from an early age, are fully equipped with all of the knowledge and skills necessary to take on leadership roles for which there may be allocations or other similar mechanisms; otherwise, we are creating a system that inadvertently sets women up to fail, thus reinforcing antiquated sexist perspectives. A woman who is given a position because of her sex, not her qualifications, is not achieving gender equality. On the other hand, a woman who is given a job because she has had equal and meaningful access to education through her life, has been afforded the same opportunities as men, has achieved her fullest potential and is fully qualified for the position achieves true gender equality.

4. The following are examples of successful Soroptimist projects that highlight some of the points mentioned above:

The life-course approach. Members of a Soroptimist International Club in the United States meet weekly with girls and women from a local domestic violence safe house to teach them job-seeking skills. Many of the women have never held jobs nor had the proper training to obtain employment. In today's market it is even more crucial that they have these essential skills.

Accessibility, acceptability, availability and quality. A club sponsored a local woman in Zambia to train and qualify as a teacher. She became the first qualified female teacher at the school. Members also sent money to buy books and equipment

for the school. Local girls needed a role model to encourage them to attend school. Women also needed the confidence to attend. There are now four female teachers at the school with over 1,000 pupils attending regularly; approximately 50 per cent are girls. Three hundred adults (mainly women) attend regularly in the afternoon.

Improving facilities. A Soroptimist International club in Thailand and a partner school identified a need for a dormitory to provide lodging for female students. Many young girls in the north of their country, particularly hill tribe girls, fall victim to human trafficking due to poverty and lack of education. By providing lodging for them at school, the club has decreased the possibility of this happening. A year-long club fund-raising effort was sufficient to pay for the building. The club's project committee made several visits to the school to ensure that the right need was being met and that the site was suitable. A Soroptimist International club in India, with the financial support of other clubs, worked with a local partner to fund and install 62 eco-friendly, low-maintenance toilets for the 270 inhabitants of a village, of whom 130 are women and girls. This has improved the safety, health and hygiene of the villagers, especially the women and girls. Now that the club has built up a good relationship with the community, and with the necessary partners, the club is working to address other issues for the village such as poor access, a lack of income-generating opportunities, poor educational facilities and the lack of a guaranteed source of clean water.

A holistic approach. Soroptimists worked in partnership with UNICEF to provide emergency "School in a Box" kits to earthquake-devastated areas. The kit contains supplies and materials for a teacher and 40 students. The purpose of the kit is to ensure the continuation of children's education in the first 72 hours of an emergency.

Encouraging women to enter traditionally "male"-dominated fields. The Soroptimist International President's appeal of 10 December 2000, "Legacy of learning", provided funds to ensure that young girls in Inner Mongolia could not only complete their compulsory six-year education, but also acquire practical skills training in horticulture, animal husbandry and basic veterinary science. Since its launch the project has achieved remarkable results: about 300 impoverished girls have returned to school. Nine training facilities were built to meet their study needs, including a greenhouse for growing vegetables and flowers, a sty, a cowshed and a forage base.

Encouraging women to enter traditionally "male"-dominated fields. A club in South Africa identified two indigent learners who showed potential to do well in mathematics and science. As South Africa has a shortage of women in the fields of mathematics and science, the club decided to sponsor them for the final three years of their high school education, covering school fees, uniforms, transport and extracurricular activities.

Equipping women with knowledge and skills. A Soroptimist club in Mauritius is a founding member of Women in Networking, which launched Women in Politics in January 2009. Women are underrepresented in Parliament and in local councils although they represent over 51 per cent of the population. A specialized trainer was recruited to train trainers, who then trained a further 22 women who had applied through an advertisement in the press. In addition, Women in Politics partnered with Gender Links, which ran three courses for women in the main political parties. Over 70 women have been trained in campaign and election skills. Some of these women ran for office in the general election and were elected.



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Statement submitted by the International Federation of Social Workers, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.

Statement

1. The theme of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, "Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work", is totally congruent with the aims of the International Federation of Social Workers. The Federation represents three quarters of a million social workers who are members of professional social work associations from 90 countries. The Federation seeks to promote social justice and human rights for all people, particularly for those most disadvantaged by social, economic and political forces. The Federation has stated clearly its position on issues of relevance to women in its International Policy on Women adopted in 1999 and updated in 2000. The policy position asserts that women's rights are inherently human rights. "The social work profession's core commitment to human rights must involve a commitment to protecting and preserving the basic rights of all women and girls." This commitment coincides with the theme of the fifty-fifth session as well as with the Millennium Development Goals, not only with particular regard to primary schooling (Goal 2) and gender equality and empowerment of women (Goal 3), but also with regard to reducing child mortality (Goal 4), improving maternal health (Goal 5), and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. For these protections are fundamental foundations for the attainment of higher goals.

2. Without securing the human rights of women, from childhood through adolescence, adulthood and old age, the chance of achieving the goals of the fifty-fifth session are seriously compromised. Human rights protection, which social work holds as a core value of the profession, must undergird all efforts for the advancement of women. Girls and women must be safe from the hazards of their birth, hunger, neglect, enslavement, rape, torture, trafficking and other violations of their human rights so that they may participate in opportunities in education, gainful and protected work, and involvement in the economic and political process.

Education

3. According to Goal 2, primary education is a human right. Yet two thirds of those who are illiterate are women. There has been some progress in realizing this goal, but gender parity in primary education has yet to be achieved. This fact continuously hampers women's ability to support themselves and their families. In countries with non-mandatory, limited access to education girls often remain illiterate, at home or at work. Increasing numbers of girls are forced to migrate because of natural disasters and human conflict. While in transit or refugee camps girls often are unable to access and participate in education.

4. Today over 1.2 billion people live on less than US\$ 1 a day, and a majority of the world's absolute poor are female. Worldwide, women on average earn about 50 per cent of what men bring home each year. Poverty detrimentally affects girls' and women's ability to access education. In developing regions overall, girls in the poorest 20 per cent of households are 3.5 times more likely to be out of school than girls in the richest households and 4 times more likely to be out of school than boys from the richest households. School fees as well as the need to care for younger children also often prevent girls from pursuing primary education.

5. In poor families women and girls are often the last to eat, and in families with very limited food this often means no food at all. In poor countries girls more frequently suffer from malnutrition than boys. Girls and women who are indigenous or who suffer from various physical, developmental or emotional disabilities are especially disadvantaged and may have the worst struggles with poverty and pursuing education. While poverty affects households as a whole, because of the gender division of labour and responsibilities for household welfare, girls may be kept at home to help with household chores and the care of younger siblings, thus preventing them from pursuing education.

Technology and science

6. Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees all people, including women, the right to “share in scientific advancement and its benefits”. Since access to science and technology is a major driving force for well-being, it is essential to all people, irrespective of gender, that we address the underrepresentation and barriers to participation of women in science and technology education and employment, and the exclusion of women from access to technology. Women represent the majority of people in poverty and do the majority of the world’s work. Coupled with this is the fact that women in developing countries tend to lack access to basic technologies that would reduce labour-intensive tasks. Increasing such access allows women to spend less time on such work and increases access to education and paid employment, benefiting both women and members of their households. The issue of women’s access to such technology must therefore be addressed. The failure to address this issue is one of the factors that perpetuate the condition of women in poverty.

7. Along with this, the exclusion of women from science and technology knowledge production means that advances tend to disproportionately benefit men. To ensure that technology is accessible to women, such gender biases need to be eliminated from research and development and researchers must be sensitized to gender issues. This requires the increased participation of women in science and technology education and employment. Gender gaps and accessibility issues in education must therefore be addressed along with the reforming of the gender bias in science and technology institutions and in society that leads to the exclusion of women from science and technology. To increase the participation of women in the fields of science and technology, barriers to participation must be addressed, particularly in hiring, retention and promotion. Related to this is the issue of unequal distribution of household work and child-rearing on the basis of gender, which must also be addressed to ensure that women are not unequally affected in terms of their ability to participate equally in employment. Eliminating such biases and ensuring that women have equal access to and participate equally in science and technology therefore requires the addressing of gender discrimination in households, education, employment and related national policies.

Equal access to full employment and decent work by women

8. The importance of women’s access to employment is recognized in Millennium Development Goals 1 and 3, with women’s participation in non-agricultural employment cited as an indicator for success while promoting full and productive employment for all. There is a lack of gender-responsive policy interventions to address increasing labour market constraints including the

expanding gap between formal and informal work settings, the decrease in access to full employment and gender bias in employment culture.

9. The lack of access to decent work and the overall gender division of labour results in poverty among women. Constraints on women in the labour market such as the disproportionate distribution of gender-segregated and unpaid work decrease the efficiency of women as a work group. The issue of the unequal distribution of household work and child-rearing on the basis of gender must also be addressed to ensure that women have equal opportunity to participate in and sustain employment, and equal opportunity for promotion and employment mobility. Greater access to housing, information and communications technology, guaranteed social benefits and health care will increase access to full employment and decent work by women. Trade policies and foreign direct investment which promote sustainable employment opportunities will increase access and participation by women.

Summary and recommendations

10. The Federation firmly believes that the preceding three topics outline critical concerns for all people around the world. The International Federation of Social Workers has the following recommendations:

(a) Implementation and monitoring of efforts to achieve these goals in education, technology and equal access to employment must be viewed from the perspective of human rights protection;

(b) The United Nations, Governments, business and civic society need to work together to promote equal access to education for girls and women;

(c) The provision of needed social and economic supports by Governments can serve to promote equal access and educational achievement for girls and women;

(d) Gender bias must be eliminated from research development in science and technology through the increased participation of women in science and technology-related knowledge production, education and employment.



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Statement submitted by Al-khoei Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.

Statement

1. Al-khoei Foundation is submitting the present statement to appeal to the Member States, through the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-fifth session, in order to focus greater attention on issues relating to the education and empowerment of women, in particular Muslim women around the world, and their access to full employment.
2. It is not a hidden fact that, unfortunately, in today's world, religion is used as a pretext for the suppression and undermining of the capabilities of women and girls. For this reason, the Foundation takes it as its duty to preach the true teachings of Islam and its support for women's rights to equality and personal development. Despite acknowledging that both genders deserve the fundamental right to education, more than 100 million children, 60 per cent of whom are female, lack access to primary level education. Just under a billion adults worldwide are illiterate, of whom approximately 70 per cent are female. Equality in access to all levels of education is critical in empowering the female population to take positions of responsibility in the economic, social and political aspects of their societies. Education allows a woman's potential to flourish. The fruits of such progress are improvements in health, nutrition and well-being for women and their families.
3. Issues of women's empowerment and their full and equal participation in public life are human rights issues. Human rights norms and standards guarantee women the human rights to non-discrimination in all aspects of political, economic and social life, and to full and equal participation in decision-making and access to power at all levels. At the same time, realization of the full spectrum of human rights for women depends on women's full and equal participation in decision-making.
4. The Foundation states that in order to attain the aims detailed by the Millennium Development Goals, all discrimination towards women, which impedes their participation in all decision-making processes, must be totally eradicated. The attention and support of government officials towards this goal is essential if this wish is to be realized.
5. Although the ratio of females to males in education, at all levels, has increased, there still remains a gap in the quality of and importance placed on education for females. In this regard, the Foundation has continued its work with women and young girls with the aim of enlightening and educating them through various seminars and workshops, in accordance with the requirements and goals of the Millennium Development Goals. This work is vital, as the Foundation understands that one of the key factors affecting the growth of healthy societies and economies is the availability of high quality, relevant education.
6. The Foundation has realized, through its experience, the importance of involving men in the promotion of women's rights, according to the Islamic perspective. The male support team is administered separately and trains men in understanding the importance of women in the community, the need for their participation in family and community decision-making and for the prevention of discrimination and violence against women, whether it be domestic or public. These men take it as their duty to pass on these values and this different perspective to other men in the community through lectures, one-on-one teaching programmes and

seminars. These participants become agents of change in their communities, thus aiding and hastening the realization of this important change.

7. The Foundation provides high quality, full-time primary and secondary level education to both genders. The Al-Zahra and Al-Sadiq schools in London, the Al-Iman school in New York and the Al-Huda school in Montreal, Canada, focus on the growth, development and education of both genders.

8. The Foundation also runs a part-time school, the Al-Salam school in London, open to both boys and girls, which encourages the education of morals and ethics needed for the healthy growth of young individuals in today's society. The Foundation currently has 350 students attending and hopes to increase its student list.

9. The Foundation is looking to open its university "Al-Kawthar", in Pakistan, to women. The fully functioning university currently caters to men but increasing efforts are being made to increase the facilities to cater to a female population also.

10. The Foundation also has a part-time school in Paris for both genders and continues its hard work in guiding and educating the youth. It continues that work with several youth groups, with the aim of empowering and challenging young Muslim women to think about and strengthen their position and contribution to the community.

11. Our success has come mainly through the following four projects, which have been running for a number of years and are firmly rooted in the Foundation.

12. Bonat Al-Mustaqbal consists of projects initiated and organized by the Foundation's youth group. The projects are specifically geared to promote confidence, capacity-building and leadership skills among youth. A multi-ethnic, multicultural mother and toddler group is currently in its fourth year of operation. Educated speakers are invited to run workshops aimed at building the confidence and increasing the potential of young mothers who in effect are the builders of the next generation of society.

13. The Foundation organizes projects that encourage young girls to take an active part in interfaith debates and workshops by visiting local schools and hosting open discussions for local schools and universities, as well as by inviting neighbours of the mosque and surrounding areas to participate in question-and-answer sessions regarding Islam. This increased level of discussion and open education will help to create greater tolerance for different faiths, and help to better understand them.

14. Capacity-building is the central theme of all the Foundation's projects. These projects rely on the women having a high level of self-confidence about their importance to society.

15. The Foundation strongly believes that self-confidence is expressed through one's ability to socialize and meet new people. For this reason, the Foundation regularly plans trips for young women to encourage them to take these important first steps in their development and growth.

16. Three decades of wars, massacres and sectarian killings have left Iraq with as many as a million widows, according to the Government of Iraq. These widows have no one to look to, and this is not just a problem for one organization or one body to tackle. The situation has spiralled so far out of control that it is important

that all bodies with any authority act in favour of rehabilitating, supporting, educating and empowering these widows and young girls. Only in this way will they be able to grow in confidence and find their place in society. The recent launch of the "Al-Kawthar" project for widows and orphans was a major step in aiding those afflicted by war and destruction. This has drawn attention to the barriers that still remain to the education of girls, including living in poverty or in rural areas or urban slums, belonging to an ethnic minority or living with a disability, along with other cultural obstacles, early marriage and teenage pregnancy. The project makes it possible for the Foundation to help improve the quality of life of orphans and help them to have the chance to live a normal life, to which any child is entitled. The Foundation also helps to empower widows to be able to be independent and support their young children. These life-saving skills give the widows confidence to face the world and their problems. This project encompasses a capacity-building programme for widows and orphans, a school supply kit programme, a microcredit programme to assist widows and a sponsorship scheme.

17. The attention brought to the increase in gender-based and sexually motivated violence, as outlined during the fifty-fourth session of the Commission, encouraged the Foundation to hold a series of self-defence classes for women. A workshop was held with the attendance of police officers from the metropolitan police force, in which they demonstrated several ways for a woman to be more alert and aware of her surroundings and be confident enough to act in the right manner if placed in a life-threatening situation. The success of these workshops saw a call for further seminars to take place with the police force giving the rare opportunity for the women and young people of the community to share ideas and concerns with high-ranking police officials and take part in an interactive discussion after observing real-life scenario role plays.

18. The Foundation strongly believes that with the presence of confident leaders and experienced mentors, younger members of the community will be able to learn and take after such leaders and mentors. The ongoing leadership mentoring programme teaches the mentors the skills they need, including communication and social skills, but also essential office and information technology skills.

19. The young leaders and mentors go on to become voluntary teachers, organizing and running classes for the young members of the community. Due to its success among and the demand from the members of our community, the Foundation will expand the programme and continue to provide guidance, help and skills to those in need.

20. In addition to its academic objectives, the Foundation believes in the physical aspect to growth and development. The Foundation offers a programme that allows young girls to participate in physical activities and sports.

21. It must be stated, in conclusion, that despite the appearance that women are being offered more options and have achieved significant improvements in their status, there are still alarmingly high incidences of abuse of women or of violations of their rights.

22. It is only through modernization, a gradual change in the psychological thinking of society about the equally significant role of women, and, most importantly, educational opportunities, that women worldwide can finally break free from these violations. Affirmative action should be taken to make up for the past

discrimination and to allow qualified women a level playing field in all aspects of life. Women worldwide need to be empowered by being informed of their rights through education in a formal and informal manner, in order to shift away from the traditionally weaker and more submissive gender to that of a more assertive role.

23. Although much has changed, it cannot be denied that there remains a mountain to climb. The remaining injustices should be articulated, examined and tackled by society at large. Women have not been the passive recipients of miraculous changes in laws and human nature. Many generations of women have come together to effect these changes.

24. The Foundation calls for the application of justice in the context of promoting women's rights in Muslim countries and has requested more and better resources for the implementation of women's empowerment initiatives, both at the governmental and at the civil society levels.

25. The Foundation is highly concerned about the lack of awareness about the need for education and training for women, especially in relation to refugees and displaced women and girls in post-conflict areas of the world.

26. The Foundation believes that the establishment of conditions for the educational, economic, social and cultural development of women worldwide will make it possible for them to enjoy their rights and become influential in the societies they live in.



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Statement submitted by Pathways to Peace, Women's Intercultural Network and Women's World Summit Foundation, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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* E/CN.6/2011/1.



Statement

Convening of a Fifth World Conference on Women

1. We urge the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (2011) to support a United Nations Fifth World Conference on Women and to advance this proposal to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. The Target date would be 2015, 20 years after the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. The reasons for holding a Fifth World Conference on Women are set out below.
2. A Fifth World Conference on Women would generate awareness of the new super-agency, UN Women, raise consciousness, provide media coverage and raise funds.
3. The potential of a Fifth World Conference on Women as a consciousness-raising focus is enormous. It would be the first such conference in the twenty-first century, the first since widespread use of the Internet and technologies that could bring the conference to every city in the world. As a United Nations-sponsored conference of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society, the focus would be on learning best practices, networking support and implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, and the Millennium Development Goals.
4. A Fifth World Conference on Women would be the first to make widespread use of the Internet and associated technologies to bring women's issues and solutions to worldwide attention. The Internet provides the means to bring issues and solutions to global awareness: what delegates are hearing, seeing and learning can be transmitted via live streaming, webcasts and smart phones, and by 2015 there will be still other technologies. Panels, presentations and interviews can reach audiences in places throughout the world. Individuals attending the conference will be able to communicate directly with their home communities. Events and presentations about what has been accomplished by and for women would educate and inspire. The conference would raise awareness that the planet and humanity need to have women involved at every level for there to be peace and sustainability in the world. The Fifth World Conference on Women would be to activists what the Olympic Games are to athletes.
5. Development of the next generation of women global and local leaders, who will know one another, will grow out of a Fifth World Conference on Women. At the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (Beijing+15), it became evident how influential the Fourth World Conference on Women had been in developing leadership and networks among the women who were at Beijing, most of whom are now in their 60s and 70s. They have had a major influence on shaping programmes at every level. A Fifth World Conference on Women would bring current and future women leaders together, creating and mobilizing effective intergenerational leadership. Women's friendships and causes are the glue of lifetime alliances, providing emotional support for leaders of NGOs.
6. Women want a world fit for children; a Fifth World Conference on Women would be a big step in that direction. It would provide a platform for voicing the concerns that mothers universally have about their children's future and help create the political will necessary to create a world where children, and therefore everyone,

would not fear physical or psychological violence; where there would be enough good food to eat, clean air and water, health care, education, and freedom to think, speak, create and love. A Fifth World Conference on Women would energize the global women's movement towards this end.

7. Neuroscience since Beijing has shown that women respond to stress differently than men. Women reduce stress by sharing perceptions, feelings and strategies. This is called the "tend and befriend" oxytocin response, and is enhanced by estrogen (UCLA research, S.E. Taylor et al., 1990). This hormonal response supports dialogue, collaboration and peaceful resolution of conflicts and supports the designation of women as the "empathic gender" (Simon Baron-Cohen research summation, 2003). This contrasts to men's "fight or flight" physiological adrenaline and testosterone response to stress, which increases aggression and competitiveness. For peace and sustainability, political decisions and budgets need to be more oxytocin-influenced and less testosterone-driven; for Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) to be effective, gender equality and women's empowerment are requirements.

8. All of the Millennium Development Goals require the empowerment and equality of women in order to be implemented. To achieve gender equality and empower women, the political will to make these goals national and international priorities has to exist. Mobilization of women on their own behalf has been the most effective, and often the only, reason for the gains made so far. All eight Millennium Development Goals touch essential aspects of women's well-being and in turn, women's empowerment is critical for achieving the goals (documentation of the United Nations Development Fund for Women).

9. A Fifth World Conference on Women and events leading to and following it would further lead women's empowerment and equality towards critical mass and a tipping point that would bring gender balance to the world. The historical precedent is the women's movement in the United States in the late 1960s and 1970s, which had its beginnings in small consciousness-raising groups and the dissemination of information through articles and conferences. Within a decade, there were major changes in the cultural attitude towards women and how women saw themselves. Now women are once again coming together in circles of support and action. When an idea, attitude or belief such as equality, which was once resisted, reaches a critical mass, women and gender balance will become accepted as ordinary.

10. Women want a Fifth World Conference on Women. A grass-roots petition has over 10,000 signatures (see www.gopetition.com/petitions/support-a-un-5th-world-conference-on-women.html). Once the decision to hold this conference is made, the news will spread from woman to woman in geometric progression: if three women each tell three others, and so on, in 19 steps (3^{19}), the news would reach more than a billion women (1,162,261,467) via conversations, e-mails, cell phones, smart phones, blogs, websites and social networks.



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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by HelpAge International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.



Statement

Introduction

1. Many older women continue to experience violation of their rights in relation to access to and participation in education and training and thus to equal and equitable access to full employment and decent work. In the absence of adult education and training programmes, many older women are unable to develop human capital which could help them adapt to the challenges of work in later life. Not only does this restrict their ability to support themselves in later life, it also impacts on the dependent children and adults which many older women provide care for.

2. Older women's rights in this area are firmly established under international law. In general comment No. 6 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: The economic, social and cultural rights of older persons, with reference to articles 13-15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the right to education and culture, the Committee notes that article 13 of the Covenant recognizes the right of everyone to education and, in the case of the elderly, that the right must be approached from two different and complementary points of view: (a) the right of elderly persons to benefit from education programmes; and (b) making the know-how and experience of elderly persons available to younger generations. With reference to articles 6-8 of the Covenant on rights relating to work, the Committee "stresses the need for measures to prevent discrimination on grounds of age in employment and occupation" and the implementation of "retirement preparation programmes" including the opportunities and conditions for continuing an occupational activity and facilities for adult education.

Women and work in later life

3. The twenty-first century is witnessing unprecedented demographic change as populations worldwide are ageing. Today, according to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat two thirds of the world's older people live in low- and middle-income countries and this proportion is set to rise to 80 per cent by 2050. Women are more likely to reach older age than men, with 88 men for every 100 women over 60 and the proportion of women increasing (to 67 men for every 100 women in the over-80 age group) as people age further. Older age is a period of particular vulnerability for women. This has been recognized by the United Nations and by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which in general comment No. 6 acknowledges that older women are often in "critical situations".

4. Population ageing is not without its challenges, and high-income countries are already witnessing trends towards working longer and postponing retirement. For millions of older people in low- and middle-income countries who are working in the informal sector, work in later life has been a permanent reality rather than a recent phenomenon.

5. Employment in the informal sector is characterized by insecurity and vulnerability, and women in particular are overrepresented in vulnerable employment and face wage differentials. A lifetime of informal-sector work combined with childbearing and household responsibilities and discriminatory

property and inheritance laws means that women reach older age with no savings, assets or pensions. In this context, widows are especially vulnerable.

6. For many older women, vulnerable employment can be exacerbated by age-related sensory loss, cognitive decline and/or decreasing mobility and physical strength. Low levels of basic literacy, numeracy and vocational skills as a result of gender discrimination from a very young age limit older women's ability to adapt their work to physical changes in later life and diversify their work as skills acquired in younger age become increasingly superseded by new skills, knowledge and technology. Again according to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, on average, in low- and middle-income countries 58 per cent of women over 65 cannot read or write. This rises to an estimated 78 per cent in Africa.

7. The discrimination which many older women experience further constrains their ability to access and participate in education and training and thus limits their enjoyment of equal and equitable access to full employment and decent work in later life. In its general recommendation No. 27 on older women and protection of their human rights (2010), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recognizes that "[t]he discrimination older women experience is often multidimensional, with age discrimination compounding other forms of discrimination based on sex, gender, ethnic origin, disability, levels of poverty, sexual orientation and gender identity, migrant status, marital and family status, literacy and other grounds".

8. Furthermore, as migration, urbanization and the AIDS epidemic continue to transform the traditional family unit, many older women have become the main breadwinner, caring for grandchildren and for adults living with HIV. Older women's income from work thus becomes vital in supporting younger family members to meet their health, nutrition and education needs. Decent working conditions and full employment as a result of access to education and training would better enable older women to provide for dependent grandchildren and adults. Their role in providing support to girls and younger women is also highly relevant in recognition of the intergenerational transmission of human capital and further highlights the importance of education and training for older women.

Older women's education and training, access to full employment and decent work: impact on older women

9. For older women with minimal levels of literacy, numeracy and skills, education and training in later life are vital to facilitate their access to full employment and decent work so as to be able to support themselves financially, and more generally for the full development and advancement of women. For example, as a direct result of taking part in a community literacy programme for older people in Lima, 74-year-old Doña Antonia was able to read, write and do the calculations necessary to run her business selling plants at the local market.¹

10. Acquiring literacy, numeracy and new vocational skills in later life is especially important as they enable older women to diversify and adapt their work to meet the challenges presented by physical changes in older age. In Uganda, older

¹ M. Gorman and others, *Forgotten workforce: older people and their right to decent work*, (London, HelpAge International, 2010), p. 43. Available from www.helpage.org.

women who are physically unable to travel to market to sell their goods have reported being exploited by resellers because they are unable to count and thus are not in a position to negotiate a fair price for their goods.² In Peru, older women carrying out manual work such as embroidery and spinning wool are paid on a piece-rate basis. This income can be severely reduced by health problems associated with older age such as poor eyesight and osteoporosis.³ Learning a new skill could enable older women to carry out an occupation that is more suited to their physical capabilities.

11. In addition to the direct link between education and training and older women's access to full employment and decent work, older women also experience indirect links. Low literacy levels are one of the constraints faced by older women in accessing microcredit for small business enterprise. In Nigeria, less than 8 per cent of women aged 60 and above are able to access credit facilities compared with 39 per cent of women aged 30-44.⁴ Literate and numerate older women are more confident and self-assured and thus able to access information for small business enterprises or join associations of older persons or workers which collectively access microfinance or form savings groups.

12. Older women who are not literate also tend to miss out on opportunities to learn techniques for improving their livelihoods or access information which could support them to challenge discriminatory property and inheritance laws that deny them access to land and property, important physical capital for older women's work providing both a workplace and collateral for accessing microfinance.

Older women's education and training, access to full employment and decent work: impact on girls and younger women

13. As migration, urbanization and the AIDS epidemic continue to transform the traditional family unit, many households find themselves headed by older women. For example, evidence from the United Republic of Tanzania and Ethiopia found that two thirds of carers in skipped-generation households are widows. In this respect, older women's education and training is vital both to provide financial support to children and grandchildren through improving access to decent work, but also to support the transmission of human capital between generations by facilitating girls' and younger women's participation and access to education and training.

14. Older women who have access to decent work are more able to pay school fees and purchase school materials for grandchildren in their care. Many older women know the importance of education and feel they must work hard to ensure that they can afford to send their grandchildren to school. Their income also ensures that children receive adequate nutrition and health care which contributes to educational

² Ibid., p. 72.

³ K. Truelove, *Working for life: making decent work and pensions a reality for older people* (London, HelpAge International, 2009), p. 21. Available from www.helpage.org.

⁴ Response to the questionnaire sent by the Division for the Advancement of Women on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, Abuja, March 2009.

achievement. Furthermore, children who are economically supported are less likely to have to work and can remain in education longer.

15. The International Labour Organization recognizes that “gender discrimination in access to education starts from a very young age ... and is often continued in the next generation”.⁵ Older women who have received education or training in their lifetime are more likely to value its importance for girls in their care and will give equal consideration to both girls’ and boys’ education when allocating resources. They can also play a vital role in providing formal and non-formal education and training where geographic location or culture limits access to education for girls, and provide support with homework.

16. Educated older women can play a key role as mentors and role models. Whether they are employed in the formal or informal sector, and whether they operate a small business or rear livestock, older women can support girls and young women to make informed choices about their futures and pass on skills and experience.

Recommendations

17. In recognition of the intergenerational transmission of human capital and the right of older persons to education, HelpAge International urges the Commission on the Status of Women to recommend that Member States adopt a lifelong approach to education and training for women through legislation, programmes and public awareness campaigns.

18. In general recommendation No. 27 on older women and protection of their human rights (2010), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recognizes that the “full development and advancement of women cannot be achieved without taking a life cycle approach”. HelpAge International urges States parties to fulfil their obligation under the Convention, as outlined in general recommendation No. 27, “to ensure equality of opportunity in the field of education for women of all ages and to ensure that older women have access to adult education and lifelong learning opportunities as well as to the educational information they need for their well-being and that of their families”.

19. Education and training programmes for older women should be designed with a livelihoods approach in order to address the constraints which they face in access and participation such as restricted physical mobility, childcare responsibilities, limited occupational activities and discriminatory cultural and social norms.

20. Programmes should also take into account the heterogeneity of older women and provide both formal and non-formal education and training that is appropriate and relevant to needs, capacities and contexts, including those of the “younger old” and “older old”.

⁵ International Labour Office, *Guidelines on Gender in Employment Policies* (Geneva, 2009) p. 45.



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Statement submitted by Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.

Statement

1. The Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, has functioned for over 40 years, providing over \$1.5 million in grants to 350 organizations in 72 developing countries for grass-roots, local projects, many of which further the Millennium Development Goals. Since achieving its consultative status, the Fund has participated in every session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

2. The Fund recognizes that, throughout the world, women and girls have not had the same opportunity to enter the workforce in the sciences, engineering and mathematics professions as their male counterparts. Though it appears that women do better in achieving salaries comparable to those of their male counterparts employed in these fields, there are considerably fewer women who remain in these fields and those who do often find it difficult to be promoted into management and administrative positions.

3. The Fund calls the Commission's attention to its Erna Hamburger Fund, which is specifically designed to support projects for education and training in the sciences. In 1988, Erna Hamburger, a former vice-president of the board of the Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund, was honoured by her many friends who established an endowment in her name. The endowment has reached over \$75,000, providing grants for projects that encourage the education of girls in developing countries in mathematics, science, or engineering.

4. Eight grants have been issued since 1993:

- In the Philippines, in 1993, a grant from the Fund supported the purchase of computer equipment, which enabled the Science and Technology Advisory Council to provide hands-on science materials in rural areas. The programme was subsequently given further support from the United Nations Development Programme.
- In Ghana, in 1998, the Fund provided support to a programme that helped break the stereotype that girls who entered science, mathematics and engineering programmes were less feminine.
- Also in Ghana, in 2001, the Fund supported enhanced teacher training in science and mathematics, providing laboratory equipment and textbooks in a remote area.
- In Fiji, in 2002, the Fund established a project that brought together teachers and girls from 10 remote areas to foster interest and understanding of the physical and applied sciences.
- In Ghana, in 2003, a grant from the Fund allowed for the purchase of chemicals and other materials needed to fund workshops for teachers and students, creating awareness of science-related fields for girls.
- In Cameroon, in 2003, the Fund supported a seminar for 100 girls from six rural areas to provide education in science-related careers and to minimize the stigma of women in the sciences.

- In Fiji, in 2005, the Fund supported an additional science, technology, engineering and mathematics workshop for 10 junior secondary schools.
- In India, in 2010, the Fund equipped a laboratory for the Auxilium Girls' School in Tripura.

5. The Fund recognizes that it reaches only a small number of those in need. Locally identified projects have been successful and provide examples for others to follow.



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Statement submitted by Al-Hakim Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/L.



Statement

1. On the occasion of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Al-Hakim Foundation, which represents a large proportion of the women of Iraq, would like to extend its best wishes to all the delegations that are participating in the session.
2. Al-Hakim Foundation is committed to working for collective human security and sustainable peace in cooperation with civil society and the relevant Government and international parties, including those within the United Nations. The Foundation would like to work with others in all parts of the world towards replacing the culture of armed conflict with a culture of peace where racism, discrimination, economic oppression, violence and all types of subjugation are unknown and where women may enjoy opportunities for full participation on a basis of equality with men.
3. While most countries, including Iraq, have made progress with regard to girls' primary education, there is a continuing need for efforts to be made to maintain and reinforce those gains by ensuring that the laws which provide that education should be both free and compulsory are applied and by dealing with such common problems as the lack of basic facilities in schools, parental lack of awareness of the importance of girls' education and the problem of poverty. The financial difficulties of their families, particularly in the current global economic crisis, lead to many girls being deprived of educational opportunities.
4. The Foundation believes that in order to make progress in this regard, it is important to create a close partnership between national Governments, local authorities and civil society. On the basis of that principle, and believing as it does that general access by girls and women to all levels of education is a fundamental condition for the advancement of women, Al-Hakim Foundation has, since 2003, promoted an extensive educational process in Iraq, through its schools and education institutes, which have provided thousands of Iraqi girl students with the opportunity for education from the primary to the advanced academic levels. It has also run literacy courses in various parts of Iraq.
5. While we appreciate all the efforts that are being exerted by the United Nations and States Members to empower women and allow them to achieve equality and exercise all their freedoms and rights, we should like to point out that a woman's freedom to choose clothing that is consistent with the teachings of her religion and her beliefs is one of the most basic, legitimate rights of every woman.
6. Al-Hakim Foundation, which is one of the biggest civil society institutions in Iraq, through the various activities of its Department of Women's Affairs, consistently endeavours to educate Iraqi women, protect their rights and give them appropriate opportunities at all levels. It also conducts a variety of programmes that are designed to provide poor women with material support. It has a particular interest in supporting widows, of whom there are many in Iraqi society. Foundation programmes also aim to assist Iraqi women in confronting a range of challenges, the most significant of which include violence and domestic violence.
7. Violence against women has become a serious global phenomenon which affects every society in the world, including Iraqi society. It is a phenomenon that is abhorrent to all religions, laws and the conscience of mankind.

8. As part of the international campaign to eliminate violence against women that was launched by the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, on 25 February 2008, Al-Hakim Foundation has undertaken numerous activities with a view to increasing public awareness of and intolerance for this phenomenon.
9. The Foundation adopted the Islamic Day Against Violence Against Women initiative that was launched by the late Iraqi leader Mr. Abdulaziz Al-Hakim in January 2009, believing that it constitutes significant, fundamental support for Iraqi, regional and international efforts in that regard. Confronting violence against women is both a religious duty and a humanitarian issue. Because we believe that supporting and building on this initiative will pull the rug from under the feet of extremists and those who commit violence in the name of religion, we call on all the relevant international organizations to support it.
10. While we heavily underline the importance of all Governments supporting and encouraging programmes to raise awareness of violence against women, we also request them to promulgate appropriate legislation and take the necessary preventive and penal measures to suppress all forms of violence and the sexual exploitation and trafficking of women, and to ensure that appropriate monitoring mechanisms guarantee that such legislation is strictly applied.
11. We commend the international community for all the ways in which it has supported Iraqi women, who were always the first victims of the aggressive policies of the former dictatorial regime and of the practices of armed terrorist groups.
12. Notwithstanding all the progress that has been made with regard to the status of women in Iraq, women continue to face many difficulties and challenges. Nevertheless, we will maintain our very real efforts to empower women through Iraqi civil society organizations, of which Al-Hakim Foundation is one of the most prominent. The Foundation consistently aims to increase the visibility of women in all State sectors and encourage them to make an active contribution to the political process; it works with women in order to preserve the successes that have been achieved in the new Iraq.



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Statement submitted by International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/L.

Statement

1. The advancement of women and girls is one of the areas of concern of the International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 22 countries, both of the South and the North. Taking into consideration that the review theme of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women is the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child, one of the adopted agreed conclusions of the Commission at its fifty-first session,¹ this statement presents the voices from group discussions with the participation of more than 400 women and girls, held in Australia, India, Peru and Zambia. The statement depicts stories of effective practices and implementation gaps in the framework of the agreed conclusions, in both urban cities and rural villages, and contains some of the recommendations formulated by women and girls.

Effective practices

2. Considerable efforts have been made to meet the target of eliminating gender inequalities in primary and secondary education, by making education compulsory and free for all. Incentives, such as: introducing a midday meal scheme in schools providing free lunch to students on all working days in the hope of protecting them from classroom hunger and malnutrition; increasing school enrolment and attendance; improving socialization among children of all walks of life to reduce discrimination; ensuring safe and supportive school environments for girls; and providing employment to women, paving the way to economic and social empowerment. An enabling environment is created for pregnant girls to continue their education.

3. Gender budgeting with special attention to the girl child has been given importance in the following areas: improvement of school infrastructures, regular health checkups, reduction in gender gaps in literacy and wages, cash transfer schemes for the registration of the girl child, immunizations, school enrolment and retention, and enforcement of the minimum age for marriage. Scholarships are available for tertiary education. Some of the other programmes considered under gender budgeting relate to "bridge schools" providing quality education packages to the girl child, in particular to street children, child labourers, and children of sex workers; nutrition programmes for seasonal migrant girls; awareness campaigns to provide education and training on gender issues; compulsory registration of pregnancies and births; and cash certificates for the girl child born and registered in a family below the poverty line as a financial support to the family at the time of the girl's marriage.

4. Legislation regarding child labour in all its forms, child marriage, sexual exploitation, sex determination and trafficking has been enacted. Offices have been established for the advancement of women.

5. Effective practices also include creating enabling environments for girls to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Neighbourhood Children's Parliaments

¹ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2007, Supplement No. 7 (E/2007/27)*, chap. I, sect. A.

bring together girls and boys in small groups at neighbourhood level, enhancing gender equality and better lives for all.

Implementation gaps

6. The *Human Development Report 2010* of the United Nations Development Programme states that the disadvantages facing women and girls are a major source of inequality and that all too often women and girls are discriminated against in health, education and the labour market with negative repercussions on their freedoms. It also brings out the fact that gender inequality varies tremendously across countries. The *2010 Trafficking in Persons Report*, recently published by the United States State Department, emphasizes that trafficking is a fluid phenomenon responding to market demands, weakness in laws and penalties, and economic and development disparities, and that more people are trafficked for forced labour than for commercial sex.

7. The organization is aware of the numerous stories of struggling women and girls, narrated by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn (Half the Sky movement). The following are some of the stories narrated by women and girls during the group discussions. These stories are the tip of the iceberg of the struggles faced by women and girls across the world. They reveal the existing gap between the commitments made in the agreed conclusions on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child and the implementation of those commitments:

- Lima, 16 years of age, was promised a job; the employer sexually abused her and threatened to kill her if she were to let others know about the abuse; the girl later became sick and died
- Doris, a 12-year-old adolescent, was forced into child labour due to poverty at home; she was expelled from the job when she reported that the employer was sexually abusing her
- Girls in schools were promised question papers ahead of exams if they allow themselves to be sexually exploited by the teachers
- Women and girls are promised employment in other countries and are forced into brothels as prostitutes
- Girls going into prostitution are exploited by the perpetrators from other countries, for pornography, even to have sex with dogs
- Girls were asked by their families to have multiple jobs like selling things in the market and as domestic workers for minimum wages
- Becoming sex workers is not an option for many girls as it is their livelihood to earn money for school fees, to meet basic needs and support their families
- Patients in need of medical care in hospitals are expected to bring the basic needs such as bed sheets, pillows, blankets, needles, gloves, buckets, money to purchase medicines

8. The group discussions also brought out the fact that while pressure groups in developed countries lobby governments on matters such as trafficking and equal opportunity for women and girls, sweat shops exploit the labour of migrant groups, especially women and girls, to produce low-priced goods, and the sex industry is

able to hide the existence of trafficked workers. Girls living in rural and remote areas are more disadvantaged and are vulnerable to domestic violence and sexual exploitation.

9. The fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women encouraged the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, as well as all human rights treaty bodies, to invite States parties to ensure that their reports explicitly address the situation of the girl child. The Commission also called for the United Nations country team to strengthen their advocacy at the country level and their technical capacities to address all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child. In spite of the many efforts, the stories told by the girls during the group discussions speak to us of the vast implementation gap.

Recommendations

10. The organization therefore recommends that Governments and the international community:

- Create enabling environments to promote universal participation of girls based on equality of rights and opportunities in order to reduce gender inequality.
- Give attention to the multidimensional poverty when investing in policies and programmes for girls. In the publication of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs entitled *Report on the World Social Situation 2010: Rethinking Poverty*, it is stated that poverty is deprivation of one's ability to live as a free and dignified human being with the full potential to achieve one's desired goal in life.
- Collaborate with the civil society organizations to accelerate progress to end discrimination and violence against the girl child, and to empower them.
- Mandate the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) to ensure enforcement of the existing legal instruments in favour of girls.

The real hope for greater progress is the priority theme of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission "Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work" and the creation of the new entity UN Women.



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Statement submitted by Dones per la Llibertat i Democràcia, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/34.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.



Statement*

1. Dones per la Llibertat i Democràcia ("Women for Freedom and Democracy") is an organization headquartered in Barcelona, Spain, that is active throughout Spanish territory and internationally, although the core of its activity is centred in Catalonia, Spain. Since its creation more than 10 years ago it has been working for the freedom and the human rights of women, to eliminate any form of gender discrimination, and to secure equal representation between men and women.
2. All the activities of Dones per la Llibertat i Democràcia are inspired by the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In February 2010 it obtained special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).
3. The main theme for the 55th session of the CSW focuses on "Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work."
4. Girls and young women are guaranteed access to basic education in Catalonia, Spain, and throughout Spanish territory, as education is compulsory in Spain to age 16. At the university level, the gender distribution among the various teaching specialties is not homogenous, and the majority of the female student body is concentrated in the humanities, health, education and social sciences or law, whereas engineering, mathematics, computer science and technology attract more males. Statistics for the year 2007 illustrate this point by identifying the percentages of female students in the different sectors of instruction: education 78.1%, humanities 60.3%, social sciences 58.8%, health and social services 74.5%.
5. Spain is now making a qualitative leap in the area of ICT (information and communication technologies) and gender through the promotion of training programmes, but women still have few chances to take advantage of new technologies in terms of employment, and they are underrepresented in the most highly skilled ICT jobs.
6. Great numbers of Spanish women are now joining the labour market with better credentials than most men have in terms of studies and qualifications, but many of them still fail to find employment suitable to their level of education, given the lack of equal opportunities between men and women that persists in all societies including ours and that has been worsened by the economic crisis that hit all of Europe.
7. There is also a large segment of the female workforce that has had no access to intermediate or university education and thus faces serious problems in joining the labour market.
8. At the present time, high unemployment rates are a source of concern throughout the country. The crisis has obliged many women to look for work to supplement the family income. Yet they face numerous obstacles in this search: first, the fact that they are women; second, their age; third, their lack of self-confidence and their low self-esteem; and finally, their lack of experience, training, guidance and knowledge of the labour market.

* Issued without formal editing.

9. Consequently, promoting equal access for women to full employment and decent work is a priority issue for Dones per la Llibertat i Democràcia. In March 2009 we launched a training and employment project to help women over the age of 45 obtain the training they need to access a labour market that was formerly closed to them.

10. The programme offers tools for independent job searching, it provides up-to-date information on real employment opportunities, it sponsors motivational activities, it helps women develop their personal and occupational skills, it assists in planning a job search through a dynamic support and coaching plan, and it helps women integrate themselves into social and working life.

11. Following a thorough study of the needs of women most at risk of exclusion from the labour market, Dones per la Llibertat i Democràcia mounted a programme entitled "Training and Guidance for Women in the Workforce", designed to help women put their inner resources to use, broaden their possibilities, and increase their self-esteem.

12. The programme's objectives are: to help reduce inequalities between women and men in the labour market, to boost the capacities and personal autonomy of women, to empower women and raise their profile, to move forward with integral development in order to make a significant change in women's competitive prospects, opening new horizons for them and giving them the specific tools they need to find a job, according to a concrete and dynamic action plan worked out in advance with trainers for promoting women's employability.

13. The programme has been very successful: of the 30 women who took the 56-hour training course and attended the follow-up meetings and the individual and group evaluations, the great majority landed a stable job within one week to two months after the end of their training. The programme was in fact so successful that approval has been given to repeat it in 2011.

14. This proactive model is a practical example illustrating the fact that policies to promote equal opportunities for women when joining the labour force must pay particular attention to fostering and restoring the values of each woman to whom the training is offered. Policies must include coaching and emotional support to ensure best results upon joining the labour market.

15. There is also a need for efforts to encourage and support female entrepreneurs who decide to strike out on their own. We are convinced that microcredit, which has been so successful in other parts of the world, can be of great assistance in dispelling the spectre of female unemployment.

16. Microcredit has been in use in Spain since 2001, and in 2009 it was given a definitive boost when the Spanish government signed an agreement with the CECA (Confederation of Savings Funds) to make microcredit available throughout the country.

17. This microcredit system could have a greater impact and become a more effective instrument if the size of the credits were increased: they currently range on average between €15,000 and €25,000. These are significant amounts and may be adequate, depending on the circumstances. But given market price levels in Spain's major cities, they are often insufficient for female entrepreneurs who want to start a business, for which they require premises, raw materials and hired workers.

18. In light of the foregoing, we wish to address the following recommendations to all member states:

- Encourage access to training for women who are past the age of compulsory education.
- Make sure that training for women pays due attention to the geographic setting and labour market needs of the region in order to optimize the allocation of resources and address the social and cultural setting in which women live.
- Understand the preferences and needs of the specific female social group to which the training is directed.
- Promote and create mechanisms of participation for individual women and women's groups in taking decisions on the design and operational characteristics of the training received.
- Boost the amount of microcredit earmarked for projects and initiatives of female entrepreneurs.
- Design financing policies and strategies to help women start businesses that make use of ICT, and promote ICT research programmes that will open new prospects for female entrepreneurs in cybernetic instruction and electronic trade and business.



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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by the International Network of Liberal Women, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/L.



Statement*

1. Important progress has been made towards achieving equality between women and men. Women's access to education and participation in the paid labour force has grown and legislation has been adopted for gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities.
2. Women have contributed significantly to the expansion of world economic growth in the last decades and their income has become also an important factor for their households. However, women are still largely excluded from economic decision-making. They face low wages, poor working conditions and limited employment and professional opportunities. The fact that domestic and community work does not figure in national accounts is reason enough for gender-responsive budgeting to be used in all countries.
3. Also cultures, customs and beliefs make many women and girls worldwide ignorant of their lawfully guaranteed rights and opportunities. Also universal primary education is far from being solved, especially in Africa and Southern Asia, where a vast majority of children, mostly girls, are out of school. Also due to the economic crisis there are more women in vulnerable employment and more wage differences between women and men.
4. International Network of Liberal Women (INLW) considers:
 - To keep girls in school incentives have to be provided.
 - Gender-based violence at and on the way to school has to be eliminated.
 - Primary and secondary schools, training centres and universities have to be gender sensitive.
 - Girls have the same right as boys to a good quality education.
 - Gender stereotypes have to be removed in regard to women's and to girl's access to science and technology. The media can play a key role in showing a non-stereotyped portrait of women.
 - Decent work is equal pay for equal work.
 - Customs and cultures cannot restrain women from employment.
 - Promotion of equal sharing of family responsibilities is basic for women's employment.
5. INLW considers that the newly created UN-Women has to play a key role in the implementation of women's rights, equality and gender mainstreaming and therefore stresses that:
 - The four United Nations entities that are now part of UN-Women are the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

* Issued without formal editing.

- UN-Women should take the leadership in coordinating the United Nations work on gender equality and gender mainstreaming.
- UN-Women should have a global civil society Advisory Board, in order to create partnerships, as well as to benefit from expertise and knowledge.
- UN-Women should create systematic and formal collaboration mechanisms with civil society, i.e. women's organizations in countries where the entity is also present, in order to coordinate the implementation of projects, programmes, activities and policies on the ground and at the same time managing more efficiently the funds.
- UN-Women should have close contact with all Member States of the United Nations offering action plans and guidelines of gender mainstreaming for their countries.
- UN-Women should start a worldwide media campaign together with civil society for worldwide education for women and girls, like that of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).
- UN-Women should adopt the same system of funding like that of UNICEF.
- UN-Women should have a close relationship with UNICEF because of their overall activities, with children and their families.